

22 December 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR/INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: O/CI Publication "Critical Situations"

1. Re the new O/CI publication "Critical Situations", I wish to make the following comments:

2. The crop of items in the present issue of the publication is very largely estimative in nature. The titles of almost every article in Part I carry a word indicative of some possible future development. At least three of the articles deal with subjects to be analyzed in NER's now in progress. The well-known danger is thus again upon us, i.e., the Agency's sponsoring two differing estimates on the same subject.

3. Although this number of the publication is marked for CIA use only, one copy has already gone to Mr. Cutler at the Director's request. It is my fear that subsequent issues will have additional circulation (restricted, to be sure, in conformity with the classification) beyond the Agency.

4. If my fears, as noted above, prove true, I seriously question the desirability of floating a publication the purpose of which appears to be to get the busy high level reader wheed up (and on a weekly basis) about some 15 to 20 alleged critical situations. In my view no part of the intelligence business is of more importance than the timing of the cry, wolf. As intelligence officers we have the obligation to suppress the understandable desire to shout wolf whenever we see it as a possible, and an equally high obligation to shout it to exactly the right people at exactly the right time. The best way we could devise to ruin our ability to serve at a moment of real trouble would be to gain the reputation of shouting loud, long, and indiscriminately to every ear.

5. I have some rather deep reservations on the substance of some of the items in the publication which I will pass on on request.

6. By the above I do not mean to derogate what probably was the basic idea behind "Critical Situations." I am in full agreement

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with the idea of keeping the policymakers regularly apprised of developments which present genuinely critical threats to US security. I feel that Indochina and the Off-Shore Islands are two such situations. I believe that O/CI could do a useful job by preparing careful, regular, follow-ups on such situations. I would even agree that in such a case O/CI should not be constrained from predicting short-run developments, though I would be pleased to think that they would check this material out with the appropriate people on the O/NE staff.

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